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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis that views of rape which place women at a disadvantage are positively related to beliefs which restrict the rights and roles of women in our society is tested. Two scales, the R scale and the W scale, based on a survey of beliefs about rape (Hubert Feild) and the attitudes toward women's scale (Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich), were administered as a single instrument. Subjects were 762 female and male undergraduates and employed men and women (representing mainly technical, managerial, and professional positions). For each group, product moment correlations between responses on the scales consistently supported the hypothesis. The constructed scale is appended. (Author/PN)

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Beliefs About Rape and Women's Social Roles*

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The purpose of the study was to test specific aspects of a general thesis that has been put forth by various writers in the women's movement. The thesis emphasizes that rape and other forms of sexual assault against women are supported in our society by beliefs that encourage male domination and exploitation. For example, it has been proposed that acceptance of "myths" and other negative stereotypes about rape reflect beliefs that women's social roles should be more restricted than those of men. Excellent arguments, especially from a historical viewpoint, have been presented in support of this hypothesis. Outstanding examples are Susan Brownmiller's Against Our Will (1975) and various articles by Gloria Steinem (1975). However, very little empirical research has been carried out whose specific purpose was to test whether there is indeed a positive relationship between stereotyped beliefs about rape and restrictive beliefs about women's social roles.

To discover whether such a relationship exists we constructed two scales, which we labeled the R scale and the W scale. The R scale consists of 20 statements adapted mainly from Hubert Feild's survey of beliefs about rape (Feild, 1978). The W scale also

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contains 20 items. The items in this scale were adapted from an inventory developed by Janet Spence and Robert Helmreich (1972).

In administering the scales the 40 statements were arranged in random order and presented as a single instrument, as you can see from the copy that has been handed out. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement by recording a number from 1 ("strongly agree") to 6 ("strongly disagree").

The combined scales were administered anonymously to female and male students in a large university and to employed men and women in a large metropolitan area. The college students were recruited from sororities, fraternities, residence halls, and independent houses. The employed men and women represented a variety of occupations, but mainly technical, managerial, and professional. They were recruited through service and social clubs.

The scoring procedure was such that the higher the scores, the greater the beliefs concerning negative stereotypes about rape or restrictive beliefs concerning women's social roles. To help control for acquiescence set not all of the items were worded in the same direction. Some in each scale were phrased so that agreement with a statement yielded a relatively low score (1, 2, or 3), while disagreement yielded a relatively high score (4, 5, or 6), as in these two examples: "A raped woman is an innocent victim" (item 30). And, from the W scale, "Women should have as

much sexual freedom as men" (item 34).

Other items in each scale were worded so permit reverse scoring. That is, agreement yielded a relatively high score and disagreement a relatively low score. These statements are marked with an asterisk in the copy that you have. Examples are "Many women really want to be raped" (item 20), and, from the W scale, "On the average, women should be regarded as less capable of contributing to economic production than are men" (item 36).

For each of the groups we computed the correlation between scores on the R scale and scores on the W scale. The results are shown in the table attached to the items. As the table shows, all of the correlations were significant below the .01 level of probability. These results are highly consistent with the hypothesis that stereotyped beliefs about rape are positively related to restrictive beliefs about women's roles in society. They are also consistent with some of the findings Feild (1978) reported, but considerably higher. The strongest association in our data is for employed women. Here the correlation between scores on the R scale and the W scale was .72.

It is interesting to note that on both the R scale and the W scale the mean scores for the female groups were consistently lower than those of the male groups. This finding can be interpreted as evidence for the construct validity of the scales, since

since such differences are in line with what one would expect.

Without implying a direct cause-and-effect relationship, our findings potentially have important educational applications. For example, if stereotyped beliefs about rape which place women at a disadvantage are consistently related to restrictive beliefs about women's social roles, then educational programs could be developed to help reduce those restrictive beliefs, and thus possibly decrease social support for rape. Such programs could go on not only in formal educational institutions, such as high schools, colleges and universities, but also through the mass media. Furthermore, evidence that stereotyped negative beliefs about rape are significantly related to restrictive beliefs about women's social roles in our society can help support public policies to strengthen social and economic rights for women.

In closing, I would like to comment briefly on current developments and future directions of our research. My students and I are collecting data from different regions of the country to see how the results compare with those which I have just presented. We are especially interested in extending the range of individuals to include a greater variety of cultural backgrounds, social class, and occupations. We are also planning a more extensive analysis to find which of the stereotyped beliefs about rape are most related to restrictive beliefs about women's social

roles. In addition, we shall be examining various personality characteristics, such as self-esteem, to see if they are related to those beliefs.

We are also gathering data in a different way by having individuals read news reports on rape and then respond to statements corresponding to those on the R scale, but referring to the news stories. Using this method, a pilot study by Kathi Kibler found in a small sample that the relationship between stereotyped beliefs about rape and restrictive beliefs concerning women's social roles were even higher than those I have presented here. And finally, early next year I shall be addressing still another question: To what extent does the hypothesis we have tested hold for groups in other countries, including non-English speaking ones?

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Please answer the following statements according to your personal beliefs. Mark each statement according to how much you agree or disagree with it by placing the appropriate number on the line to the left of the statement. Please mark every one. Write 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 depending on how you feel in each case.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Not sure but probably agree
4. Not sure but probably disagree
5. Disagree
6. Strongly disagree

* 1. Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.

* 2. In order to protect the male, it should be difficult to prove that a rape has occurred.

3. In forcible rape, the victim never causes the crime.

* 4. As head of the household, the husband should have more responsibility for the family's financial plans than his wife.

* 5. A woman should not expect to go exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man.

* 6. The initiative in dating should come from the man.

* 7. Most women who claim they were raped by a man they knew probably consented at the time and then changed their mind afterward.

8. Women are frequently discriminated against in our society.

9. Women are conditioned by sexist attitudes in our society to be rape victims.

10. While I might not agree to all of their tactics, in general I agree with the basic goals of today's feminist movement.

11. Economic threats (for example, an employee threatened with the loss of her job if she doesn't have sex with her boss) should be treated legally on an equal basis with threats of force in cases of rape.

* 12. Most charges of rape are unfounded.

* 13. Women with children should not work outside the home if they don't have to for financial reasons.

* 14. In general, rape victims exhibit more provocative behavior than victims of other kinds of violent crime.

15. Women should receive the same pay as men for doing the same work.

* 16. Within a marriage, there can be no such crime as rape by a husband, since a wife's "consent" to her husband is a permanent part of the marriage vows and cannot be withdrawn.

17. Most rapists are oversexed.

* 18. Women should be socially defined in terms of their relationships to men.

* 19. Women should take the passive role in courtship.

* 20. Many women really want to be raped.

* 21. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children.

22. A basic motive of a rapist is not so much sexual as it is to humiliate the victim.

23. No healthy adult female who resists vigorously can be raped by an unarmed man.

* 24. Women often provoke rape through their appearance or behavior.

* 25. A double moral standard is appropriate--one standard for women and another standard for men.

26. The defense in a rape trial should not be able to submit as evidence the sexual history of the alleged victim, unless it pertains directly to the case.

27. For a married couple, the relative amounts of time and energy to be devoted to household duties on the one hand and to a career on the other should be determined by personal desires and interests, rather than the sex of the partner.

28. Women should take increasing responsibility for leadership in solving the intellectual and social problems of the day.

* 29. A charge of rape two days after the act has occurred is probably not rape.

30. A raped woman is an innocent victim, not a responsible one.

31. There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted.

* 32. Any woman who is a "tease" or leads a man on is just asking to be raped.

33. The intellectual equality of women with men is perfectly obvious.

34. Women should have as much sexual freedom as men.

* 35. Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters.

* 36. On the average, women should be regarded as less capable of contributing to economic production than are men.

* 37. A woman should be responsible for preventing her own rape.

38. A woman can be raped against her will.

* 39. If a woman is going to be raped, she might as well relax and enjoy it.

40. Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expenses when they go out together.

Table 1

Correlations between Stereotyped Negative Beliefs about Rape (R Scale) and Restrictive Beliefs Concerning Women's Social Roles (W Scale)

	N	R Scale: Mean	R Scale: SD	W Scale: Mean	W Scale: SD	Correlation (r): R vs W	Reliability of Scale (Spearman-Brown Split-half): R	W
Female college students	432	44.8	10.0	43.5	10.8	.55**	.75	.79
Male college students	140	55.3	11.3	52.6	11.4	.54**	.67	.84
Employed women	114	43.4	11.2	44.9	13.5	.72**	.80	.91
Employed males	76	51.3	10.5	56.2	11.4	.46**	.69	.82

Note: Respondents were asked to mark each statement according to the following key: 1-Strongly agree; 2-Agree, 3-Not sure but probably agree; 4-Not sure but probably disagree; 5-Disagree; 6-Strong disagree. The higher the total score on the scale the stronger are the beliefs.

** $p < .01$